

# **OFFICER EXCHANGE**

**10.2.99 TO 14.2.99**

## **REPORT & FINDINGS**

*by*

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# INTRODUCTION



The National Officer Exchange Program was established in Hobart, to improve National Parking and Traffic enforcement operations and services. Five Officers have been selected, so far, to participate in exchanges in Hobart, Canberra, Perth, Adelaide and Brisbane.

Melbourne has been a host to 3 interstate Officers, one from Canberra and two from Hobart. This report contains the various procedures, operations and issues concerning the City Of Brisbane.

This exchange between participating capital cities enables information, technologies and techniques to be exchanged and assists in the personal development of the staff members who partake in the exchange.

The main focus of the program is to gain knowledge from the Host City's operation. This information is passed on and, if the recommendations adopted will keep our City in the forefront, for Parking and Traffic, in Australia.

# BRISBANE OFFICER EXCHANGE

*10.2.99 TO 14.2.99*

**The City of Brisbane** is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest City in the world; approximately 900 square Kilometres, and is split up into 5 areas. **Central** and 4 decentralised outer regions. **North, East, South and West.** (*See attached maps*) which is serviced by a total of 85 Officers.

**Central** 1 Team Leader, Ric Simpson who manages 3 Senior Local Laws Officers (SLLO).  
Bruce Simmons (act)  
Robert Ryan  
Scot McLaughlin.

They control a total of 36 Local Laws Officers, split into 3 teams, including 4 Officers that only collect money from meters.

## REGIONAL AREAS

**North** 1 Team Leader  
1 SLLO  
9 Officers.

**East** 1 Team Leader  
1 SLLO  
11 Officers.

**South** 1 Team Leader  
1 SLLO  
10 Officers.

**West** 1 Team Leader

1 SLLO

Being the quietest area, has only 7 Officers.

The Team Leaders and the SLLO's mostly stay in the office take calls from the Call Centre, answer any questions and allocate jobs to the Officers.

The Officers have the discretion to withdraw PIN's on the road. They don't need to get permission from the T/L or SLLO.

## VEHICLES

### Central

11 Kawasaki 550 motorcycles.

19 vehicles.

The vehicles are a combination of Magna V6's, Camry V6's Holden VT sedans / VS utilities and Ford utilities.

The Officers are very enthusiastic about using motorcycles and most of the Officers I spoke to, preferred working from them. They say that can get around their sections more efficiently than in a car.

### Regions

47 utilities

All the utilities have canopies with holding cages inside. These are mainly used in the collection of smaller animals, dogs, cats etc.

## AREAS

Central is roughly equivalent to our entire Melbourne City Council area. It has 4 Officers on foot in the CBD and up to 30 Officers in vehicles.

In the CTD (*Central Traffic District*) the motorcycles are used.

The cars and utilities are used further out and in the regional areas.

In the CTD (*see attached map*) the Yellow area is a 2 hour parking limit unless otherwise notified. That means there are a lot of areas that have no signs. But unlike Melbourne, these are not dead areas.

## EQUIPMENT

### Mobile Phones

All the Officers carry mobile phones. (*118 in total*) Radios were used but due to the vast areas the Officers had to cover, there was a severe lack of reception.

These phones are audited monthly because some Officers had phone bills of up to \$350.00 per month.

The vehicles have hands free in car kits and the motorcycle Officers use portable hands free while they are riding. Although the portable units don't always work the best.

### In car computers

In the West region, the Officers are trialing an in car Toshiba Libretto portable laptop computers. These computers are placed in an adjustable arm that is fitted on the passenger side floor (*see photos and manual*). The arm takes up a lot of room on the floor so there isn't much room left for a passenger.

The unit is linked to the office via an in car modem and the "In Field" computer program. This program is compatible with "Lotus Notes", the program used by the computers in the office.

The computer can also be used as a hand held unit in the field, via a Motorola 2 way wireless modem card, slotted into the side of the computer. It uses a 9-volt battery and lasts about 3 hours. Information can be lost if the battery happens to go flat while information is being downloaded. An external 3 ½ FDD and a CD-rom can also be used via the slot in the side of the computer.

The computer is a full Pentium 166, 2 gig HDD and a passive colour screen running Windows 95 as its operating system.

The complete system costs about \$8000 per unit. That includes the computer, in car arm, security smart card, printer, modem, external FDD, office docking station etc.

The SLLO's and Team leaders receive action requests, via the computer, and phone calls from the Call Centre. The T/L and SLLO allocate the job, or complaint, to the appropriate Officer.

### P.D.E's (Autocite)

Every Officer has their own backlit P.D.E. Their P.D.E's are only about two years old and because other Officers do not use them, they are kept in a very good condition

## **UNIFORM**

The Officers wear a corporate uniform with a small council logo stitched onto it. The council supplies broad brimmed hats, caps, sunglasses, tie, shirts, jumpers, wet weather gear, long pants, shorts, socks, shoes (up to \$50) water bottle, stainless thermos, esky, tape recorder tape measure and even a wrist watch. Uniform items are replaced every year or as required. (*see attached list*)

Officers should wear their council I.D on their shirt, although most don't. The only other article of clothing that has Local Laws Officer on it is their cap.

## **REVENUE**

Approximately 8 million dollars is raised from parking fines with a further 4.2 million dollars generated from parking meters per year.

They have an unofficial 35 PIN's a day. Most Officers have no trouble reaching this unofficial target in Central area.

In Central about 95% of the time is focused on parking, 5% on Local Laws. In the outer areas it's about 95% on Local Laws and 5% on parking. They don't put a high priority on parking in the outers.

## **FINES**

Their fines range from \$20 for a No Parking area to \$60 for a Clearway.

## **ROSTERS**

Their roster is modelled on our rostering system. (*see attached example*)

They run 3 shift teams and a day shift.

2 Officers work until 11 pm on Sunday to Thursday and 4 Officers work until 1 am on Friday and Saturday nights.

Day shift hours are from 7 am to 7 pm 7 days a week, 8 day fortnight.

2 shifts.

7 am until 4 pm and 10 am until 7 pm.

8 Officers work on a Saturday

6 on a Sunday.

Officers are expected to start and finish at home. They go to the office at least once a day to download their PDE's during quiet times. The Officers have PDE chargers at home or have an in car charger.

Lunch is a paid break and if the Officer gets an urgent call, they are expected to leave lunch and attend the call immediately.

For safety reasons, Officers must work in pairs after 6 pm.

## WAGES

A Grade 5 Officer, roughly equivalent to our Class 3a      \$505 a week (approx.)

A Grade 7 Officer, roughly equivalent to our Class 3c      \$600 a week (approx.)

A Grade 12 Officer, roughly equivalent to our Class 3f      \$680 a week (approx.)

A Grade 14 Officer, roughly equivalent to our Class 4d      \$730 a week (approx.)

Every Officer also gets a \$30 a week flexibility allowance for having flexible start times and starting from home.

Weekends are paid as overtime and any shift that starts after 12 noon is paid a 15% penalty on any time worked after 7 pm.

## SDR

Brisbane Council do not have SDR's. They have Competency Based Assessments. Every Officer must pass competencies to get wage increases. (*see attached roll statements*)

A Grade 5 (trainee) must pass Parking, Basic animal management, Dust, Litter, Water etc. to become a Grade 7 (a Traffic Officer)

A Grade 12 must be a specialist in Parking, Animal management, Vegetation, Legal skills etc.

A Grade 14 (SLLO) is not expected to know all of the above skills but must be able to manage staff.

## **ABSENTEEISM**

The Traffic Officers sick leave is at approximately 2.4% due mainly to the new roster. The rest of the Council is at about 3.5%. Morale seems to be very high. The Officers gave me the impression of being reasonably happy with their lot.

They also have unlimited sick leave, as long as a doctors certificate is produced.

Previously they had only 12 days but it accumulated. Any unused sick leave could also be payed out, but you virtually had to leave before you could claim it.

## **HEAT STRESS / RAIN**

Brisbane does not have a heat stress policy but they get paid double time if they work in the rain.

## **CALL CENTRE**

One phone number is used for anyone that needs to contact the Council for any reason. This is made to the Call Centre. If a Local Laws Officer is required, they then dispatch an Action Request to that particular area's T/L / SLLO, who then give or send it to an Officer to handle.

When the in car computer system is up running correctly, the Call Centre will be able to send the action request directly to the Officer in the field instead of going through the T/L or SLLO.

The Call Centre has 150 operators, 80 at any one time, receive up to 8000 calls a day, with an average of 6000 calls a day, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Only 15 operators are used on the weekend.

Their peak hours are from 6.30 am to 9 am and 2 pm to 5 pm.

Every operator has 21 inch computer screen. They use a program called “Lotus Notes” and in my opinion is a far better program than Vantive or Docs open. It’s very easy to use with a very easy user interface.

It is very similar to the screen used at the Local Laws Office. (*see attached examples*)

## **LOCAL LAWS**

On the screen are 6 icons, Abandoned Vehicles, Meters, Animal Management, Environment, Parks and Parking under the heading “Local Laws Standard Operational Procedure”. Standard Operational Procedure (SOP) is a fantastic system because anyone can handle queries on any subject Local Laws deal with.

If Local Laws receives an animal management problem, multiple dog attack for instance, an Officer looks down the index of the Animal Management SOP, clicks on Multiple Dog Attack and it brings up the SOP’s for Dog Attacks. It lists the purpose, definitions, abbreviations, conditions and procedures you need to follow to handle that complaint. Because the procedures are written down, you don’t get ten different versions from ten different Operators or Officers. It’s a very professional way of operating.

## **COURT**

The Officers very rarely go to court. Some Officers have been at the council over 8 years and have never been to court.

Brisbane does not have PERIN court. It is called SETONS (Self Enforcing Ticketing Offence Notice System). It is virtually identical to our PERIN court.

## **UNIONISM**

Although there has been no compulsory unionism for many years, unless you are in the union, you will not get a job as a Local Laws Officer with Brisbane Council. (*see attached local area agreement*)

## TRAINING

No formal training program is in place and none is going to be adopted in the near future. An experienced Officer does all the training of new recruits, on the job.

**Refresher courses** are non-existent. The Brisbane Officers were fascinated to hear we run regular refresher courses to make sure our Officers are kept up to date with the current legislation and work practices.

Officers learn to identify different types of rats, mosquitos, noxious weeds and other pests to pass their competencies. This is usually done on their own time and by any means they can. There is no manual or other reference material easily available to them.

Most Officers have done a driver and/or a motorcycle rider course. The Officers say that these courses are excellent and have cut down the accident rate enormously.

## TOW AWAYS

Officers must work with the Police on the Clearways. Only the Police have the power to organise a Tow Truck. The Police do not report the vehicles because their fine is only \$5 for a Clearway. In fact, any fine the Police issue for a Parking Offence, is only \$5.

## IMPRESSIONS

I got the impression from working with and talking with several Officers from Brisbane, that they are very professional. They seem to be conscientious and reasonably content in their working environment, even though they are understaffed and seem to have a large workload.

Most of the Officers seem to be in the mature age bracket and morale appears to be very high.





## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

I recommend the Melbourne City Council look seriously at its dependency on Microsoft products. Lotus Notes, the same program Brisbane City Council uses, should be considered as an alternative. I believe it is superior to the system we use for action requests etc.

Investigate further how Brisbane achieve 2.4% absenteeism. I think we should look at our sick leave entitlements, roster system, overtime, our office environment and other issues to see if we can attain lower absenteeism and a happier work place.

I also recommend that we establish a Standard Operational Procedure manual immediately.

If the Council adopts these recommendations, we will be more efficient and far more professional in our day to day operations.

Because our Officers don't do Local Laws, are not decentralised and do not have the same area to cover. I don't believe we can justify the use of the Libretto in car computer system.